

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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The Engineer's Bookshelf

By Wilson R. Dumble

FEBRUARY HILL—by *Victoria Lincoln—Farrar and Rinehart, (\$2.50)*

HEAVEN'S MY DESTINATION—by *Thornton Wilder—Harper's (\$2.50)*

The Stein Song

SHORTLY before the Christmas holidays started, about two hundred people comfortably seated themselves in University Chapel—that is, as far as any one could be comfortably seated in University Chapel—to listen to one Miss Gertrude Stein. At last, thought the audience, Columbus is to see and to hear the great Miss Stein, the Miss Stein who had influenced the writings of Ernest Hemingway and Carl Van Vechten and others, the same Miss Stein who sponsored modern French and Spanish artists painting purple pigs and pink skies.

Then Miss Stein appeared. She walked onto the stage without any introduction; and, without any hesitation, she began to talk. Digging her hands deeply into two large pockets of her brown wool skirt, and shifting her balance from one low-heeled broad shoe to the other low-heeled broad shoe, she told her audience that nouns and adjectives are not necessary, that verbs and adverbs are very interesting, that pronouns are not as bad as nouns, that the question mark is all right when it is all alone, that commas are servile, that sentences are not emotional but that paragraphs are, and that poetry is the creation of a thing without naming it.

As far as I was concerned it did not matter to me what Miss Stein said. I was happy to sit and look at and listen to that mythical figure. Surely, I thought, her reasoning showed the finest example of muddled thinking that I had heard since I last read my freshmen themes. Still, I was satisfied. For, to me, at least until that evening when she strutted onto the stage at the Chapel, Gertrude Stein had been the person who had existed only on the printed page, blurred as it was. Once more my hat is off to the young ladies of Chi Delta Phi sorority who sponsored her appearance, and once more my hat is off to any person who can bustle about this country of ours during the days of depression, talking nonsense, getting by with it and being paid for it.

And so, a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.

Again The Barrets

And, that evening, as I left University Chapel and found my way to a back-legless chair in a chromium

tavern, I wondered what Miss Stein might think of "The Barretts of Wimpole Street." I had just talked about the Barretts in my classes that day, giving a kind of review of the Quarter's happenings. I had repeated myself that day, by saying what I had predicted before my students when, several weeks earlier, I had talked about The Barretts: If the cinema production of The Barretts does not win the prize for the best picture of the year I miss my guess. To the tune of sounding brass and tinkling ice I thought that Miss Stein could never appreciate The Barretts. The lines of the show held too many nouns, too many adjectives, not enough adverbs and not enough verbs. I admitted to myself and to my companions then and there that I preferred Elizabeth Barrett to Gertrude Stein, Wimpole to the Rue Vivienne, the Sonnets of the Portuguese to "Four Saints in Three Acts."

And, but not to my great surprise, I learned two weeks later that the best cinema of the year, according to the critics, was "The Barretts of Wimpole Street." Then I trotted out my copy of Rudolf Besier's play and once again lived the scenes. I recalled Miss Katherine Cornell in the play in 1931. As a play it was an excellent example of pure comedy, heightened at times with touches of farce and deepened at time with scenes of pathos. It was an example of the work of a playwright who knew clearly what he wished to do and who did it with a firm and practised hand. And there lies the success of a dramatist, as well as the fault with Miss Stein. In "Four Saints" she does not know clearly what she wishes to do.

February Hill

A recent publication by Miss Victoria Lincoln is causing considerable commotion in the field of letters. It is a first novel called "February Hill." The story deals with a group of characters who live on the outskirts of Providence, R. I., a delightful group of rowdies who think nothing of breaking all existing moral codes and panning the Ten Commandments. If you read it you should forget any moral scruples you have entertained as you open the boards of the book. You will find that it is completely out of the ordinary, very outspoken and quite frank, but well told and strangely appealing. Surely it comes under the head of light reading.

Wilder and Wilder

Thornton Wilder has published another book, and this time the title is "Heaven's My Destination." It is the choice of the January Book-of-the-Month-Club, and tells

of the adventures of one George M. Brush, a very serious and a very determined young man. The reader follows Mr. Brush from one end of the country to the other while he is in search of a certain girl. Finally he discovers her working in a restaurant in Kansas City, marries her, and, life teaches him a lesson.

Mr. Wilder is an interesting character. He was born in Madison, Wisconsin, travelled in China when quite young with his parents, was educated at Oberlin College, took a Master's degree at Princeton University while teaching at Lawrenceville School, where he wrote, after lights were "out" at night, his famous "Bridge of San Luis Rey." The Bridge was made into one of the best silent cinemas that was ever filmed. No doubt, some day, it will receive the consideration of the talkies.

"Heaven's My Destination" would be equally as good in the cinema, for it has those things that the people like, whatever they are.

Hepburn of Hollywood

We have with us now another Miss Katherine Hepburn, not the Hepburn of "The Bill of Divorcement," nor of "Morning Glory," nor even of "Little Women." We have a Katherine Hepburn who can take the sweetened lines of Sir James M. Barrie, salt them with a Scotch accent and produce a likeable "Little Minister." Even if you have never cared for Barrie and never favored Miss Hepburn, I feel sure that you will enjoy "The Little Minister." The story is there and so are the actress and the sentiment, but it is a good picture. Barrie's sentiment always gave me a curious chill that I feared in time might turn into an attack of the flu. Only once or twice did his sweetness suit me and those were times when I saw or read his one act war plays. But now I think I can go back and read again "The Little Minister" without calling for the smelling salts. Thanks to Hepburn and the cinema!
